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## TRANSLATION: A METHOD FOR THE VITAL STUDY OF LITERATURE

### FIRST PAPER \*

#### I. THE PEDAGOGICAL PROBLEM.

Not only is the poet born such, but the lover of poetry likewise cannot, in popular opinion, be created by any educational method hitherto discovered. This much truth there seems to be in the hopeless view of them that love not the Muses, that just as the poet requires for his prime endowment a kindled imagination, so the would-be lover of poetry needs to have his imagination kindled, either by the haphazard of personal experience at the due time of susceptibility, or rather by the transmission from another of the kindling sacred fire. No teacher, however accomplished and painstaking, will succeed in the matter of creating the love of great poetry, or bringing even to a personal consciousness of the worth for the pupil of high literary art, unless there be occasions artfully found or created for the transmission of the divine fire of worship.

Just however as the scholar starts out with the assumption that the truth can be known, so the teacher should profoundly believe that his "subject" can be taught; and in the case of the teacher of literature, his "subject" is really the "appreciation of an Art, and its products" or — and we tremble at the portentous suggestion, — better still, "the pursuit of the art in efforts at production." It will be at once objected by the facetious, that we have poets, literateurs and amateurs in a sufficient number to cause anxiety — a case already of overproduction! The solemn reply to a jest is proof of dullness. The real superfluity we endure is in talent untrained, or in talent overtrained because mistakenly self-trained by methods that exhaust inspiration in pedantry; or our superfluity consists in talent prostituted, at least vulgarized, by the demand of those who

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\* To the conclusion of this paper in the October issue of *THE REVIEW*, will be appended a letter and note by Mr. William M. Rossetti upon the translations of Dante Gabriel Rossetti.

can read and write and reckon, but are none the less of the profane.

It should be possible to do at all events for Literary Art, what is done for the formal and decorative arts in countless studios, schools and institutes. What of the great expenditures of talent, enthusiasm, and funds in the teaching of the most spiritual of the arts — music? It is foolish to keep on quoting by rote "*poeta nascitur non fit*." What of artists in the other arts not less divine? Apparently no such absurd overstatement of the necessity of inspiration is made to serve as a suicidal pedagogic assumption in the case of those other arts. Aspirants after excellent performance, or merely appreciation sane and inspiring, are procured the conditions of apprenticeship, based on the needs of the artistic temperament in the average instance as ascertained from experience. Why should literary art continue to be considered an absolute exception, in that, those desirous of its service, are condemned to costly autodidactic experimentation? Because genius does occasionally win against enormous odds sensational victory on behalf of the race, shall we be cursed — not with "mute inglorious Miltons" but — with the pathetic wrong-headedness of misdirected ambition, the morose mediocrity of exhausted talent, the commercialized cleverness of improvisations, which are so clearly due, in large measure, to an inadequate culture and improper apprenticeship in his youth of the aspirant to fame?

In a previous paper have been stated, perhaps too tartly, what seem to be the characteristics of the Classic, and what therefore are the qualities to be sought for his product by the literary craftsman. But the problem still remains, how to eliminate the conceit and vanity — the self-conscious idiosyncrasy of the student — and secure his scholarly and business-like application to the mastery of his technique. Since, however, no teacher of literature at any college avows the deliberate purpose to-day of producing literary creators, — only at best refined appreciators, or may be pedantic water-witches, duly Ph.D'd, divining subterranean sources — it would be expedient if we stated frankly that the literary creator, and the literary appreciator are not so far removed from one another as at first glance may appear.

If I am to enjoy a written poem to the fullest possible degree, it must be that, through the medium of suggestive rhythms, rhymes and tone color, through collocations of word-meanings, and usage associations, I am stirred to re-create the poet's creation, to visualize, thrillingly realize, compose, construct, give enchanting verbal and tonal expressions to the central idea; except that the process is not thus analyzed, or followed in strict logical sequence, or in any necessary close conformity with that of the original poet himself. The same poem gives me each time a different complex happiness, so that clearly all sorts of variety is allowed in the process of re-creation, whereby the poem of the poet becomes my poem, and I its second poet for the nonce. The first poet differs from me, his sympathetic reader and the second poet, only in the fact that he was first to discover, to initiate, combine, devise, experience surprise, and thrill with inspiration. Besides, the sense of origination, of æsthetic pioneership, gave him a consciousness of unconscious power, for which I, his reader, must substitute worship of his vicarious genius, if I am to compass the gross equivalent for his large delight. If re-creation be then but secondary creation, we need merely distinguish between primary and secondary creation; and, while not presuming to produce or train genius as such, we can study how to teach "creation," without regard to origination. So, then, the genius will thereby obtain help for his work of origination, and the man of less extraordinary ability will be brought to understand poetic art from the poet's point of view. The latter will be better fitted to enjoy his earned place as appreciator and patron of the art, not less rightfully *his* art in virtue of *his* ability to reproduce into glorious fullness for himself the beauty of the original work of his contemporary, with calm confidence in his own spontaneous yet trained sympathy as superior to any post-mortem health certificate called a favorable critical judgment; since from the nature of the case such a critical judgment absolutely precludes and renders superfluous any fraternal assistance on the part of the man of taste to the living artist, his brother of more temperament and vital propulsion!

Supposing it to be granted by our reader, for argument's sake at least, that the teacher of literature should make it his chief

aim to impart such training as will subserve the needs alike of the primary and the secondary creator, we are face to face with a practical question of pedagogical method. It might be shown how after a careful scrutiny of the field of masterpieces, cases rare, yet sufficiently numerous, offer themselves, for our purpose, of poems in the making. We have Chaucer's two versions of his Prologue to the Legend of Good Women, of which the second so vastly improves on the first, by transposition chiefly of paragraphs. We have similarly the extraordinary example of Wordsworth's intruded 8th stanza to his Ode to Duty; of Keats' rejected first stanza to the Ode on Melancholy. We have Wordsworth's divers treatment of practically the same material in the agreeable record of a poetic experience entitled: "To a Highland Girl," and in the magnificent lyric poem, full of rhythmic spell power, and inexhaustible suggestiveness, called: "The Solitary Reaper." Such opportunities for intimate glimpses into the holy place of the muses, and into the workshop of their priests, are not so scarce, but what a good teacher, who loves and reasonably well knows the world's great poetry, can keep a class most usefully and delightfully employed for the several years of a University course. The evil, however, of this method, taken by itself, lies in the difficulty of applying any but mechanical, or purely personal tests to the industry, proficiency and good will of the student. Besides, the imaginatively indolent student will content himself with his teacher's analysis, or with his own; and wholly fail to exercise the very faculties it is desired to train, through the means of the merely rational expositions, namely, the imagination, the visual power, and the emotional understanding.

Now for the student of literature who is so unfortunate as to know one language only, there is no help in the ancient method, which we propose by this paper to advocate and extol. He will have to combine the close observation of literary masterpieces, the memorization of particular Arnoldian tidbits; the exploitation of fortunate instances which are, as aforesaid, after all not so few but that, with the good student, they will richly suffice to give him an æsthetic comprehension, although perhaps they might leave him unstimulated to realize imaginatively, unless he have

imparted to him the personal enthusiasm of his teacher. But the student of literature who has at least the rudiments of another language; who understands, therefore, the relations which always exist between thought and feeling on the one hand, and sounds and words on the other, bound by the arbitrary laws of a particular grammar and syntax, that is to say, of folk-temperament and intellectual or emotional bent and habit; for him becomes available to the full the wondrous pedagogical expedient of translation.

It has been argued from time to time by the fanatic of language-study that literature cannot be taught at all, unless it be literature in a foreign tongue. Only with the difficulties incident to the foreign tongue, could that attentive observation of linguistic details be exacted, which is so fundamental to the æsthetic perfection of the artist's great work, and therefore to its complete appreciation. This, I fear me, is a desperate plea of the philologist with an accomplishment for sale, in an age that depreciates his divine wares. While the present writer himself is polyglot by birth and rearing, and naturally enough believes therefore at least in the cloven tongue, he cannot sincerely allow this argument to be taken for more than its real value. Pedagogical difficulty does not constitute for the good teacher a baffling impossibility. Besides Spenser, Shakespeare, and Milton have been found in actual experience quite sufficiently foreign for the ordinary college student to require the use of the glossary in a right wholesome frequency, and to parse to his heart's distress for an intelligent report of the particular poems' content and intent. If Chaucer, Browning, Rossetti and Meredith be invoked to the teacher's further aid, in the interest of thoroughness, we do not seriously fear the student will glide along so smoothly through a diction and a syntax too exceedingly familiar, but what his faculties will be, kept in a walking alertness!

It is indeed too late to praise translation with the hope of being thought original! Down from classic time it was deemed the best expedient. Practically all culture revivals have begun with translation. But too often in the classroom it has been used as an exercise merely unto the close study of the foreign original,

rather than as a means of exigent discipline in the mother-tongue itself.

But, furthermore, translations can be collected and criticized, and in some instances produced by teacher and pupil, from the mother-tongue into some foreign language. When Shelley's Ode to the West Wind is carefully read and scrutinized in German, French, and Italian translations, much is learned as to the untransmissible glories of the original. When Shakespeare is pondered in Schiller's, Schlegel's or Tieck's German, or Hugo's French, one has novel, very singular and most excitingly profitable experience. Freiligrath's Burns or Byron, ay, and his Tennyson too, are not to be passed over slightly; and his *Ancient Mariner* of Coleridge is more instructive for us than Coleridge's *Wallenstein* of Schiller. The collection, collation, and sympathetic examination of versions of given English masterpieces into kindred languages, is then a pedagogical device of great value for deepening and rendering more æsthetically acute and delicate the study of the masterpiece in question.

This use of translation, although approving itself by the very first conscientious experiment, is still, however, not of such a nature as necessarily to stimulate the student's creative imagination. He may make the superiority of his original the basis of a Chauvinistic preference for his mother-tongue. He may study his original word for word, phrase by phrase, and yet keep the critic's attitude only, never himself wrestling with the angel for the divine name. Delille's *Paradise Lost* may deserve for a silly depreciation of Alexandrine couplets only, as compared with Miltonic blank verse, or to strengthen a preposterous provincial prejudice endorsed by the petty Emersonian line:

"France where poet never grew;"—

a line, the truth of which is so evident to such as are not masters enough of French to revel in the magical music of French verse!

Translations however into the student's language of foreign classics, which he can also study in the original, serve to correct this unfortunate tendency. It soon appears that all languages are rich and poor by turn. Always the poet knows intuitively

or by training the special resources of his instrument, and takes advantage of its native and acquired possibilities, so that, from the nature of the case, no poem is susceptible of a word for word, or phrase by phrase, or even sentence by sentence translation. A boast for instance like that of Mr. Dennis Florence McCarthy that "every speech and fragment of a speech are represented in English by the exact number of lines of the original," and furthermore, as the title-page advertises "in the metre of the original," cannot in the case of Calderon promise success. Conception rather by conception has to be rendered, and not phrase by phrase; and it is purely a matter of coincidence, in rhythmic and metric resources, if a rendering even of line for line is possible. Verbal identities are only sought by the pedant. The man of taste will be happy if he can find equivalences achieved for him, and his experience will have shown him how difficult is the attainment even of reasonably fair equivalences.<sup>1</sup> For let the familiar truth be spoken once again. If there be, as Archbishop Trench plead,<sup>2</sup> an "intimate coherence between a poem's form and its spirit," and that "one cannot be altered without at the same time most seriously affecting the other," this is indeed due in large part to the fact that the form is not "as a garment" but "the flesh and blood which the inner soul of it has woven for itself," just, however, because the experienced possibilities of expression have reacted more or less unconsciously on the poet's particular mode of conception. Had there not offered itself such a fortunate word, such an alluring rhyme; well, the composition might have been altogether other than it is. To insist then, as the "only principle of all true translation," upon "adherence to the form as well as to the essence of the original," is to ask of a translator more than the poet could himself have originally done in any but his own particular language no matter what his skill in any other.

Just at this point nothing could be more instructive than to compare the "Youth and Lordship" of Dante Gabriel Rossetti with the Italian original, which his brother positively

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<sup>1</sup> Preface to Calderon's Dramas.

<sup>2</sup> Calderon, *His Life and Genius, with Specimens of his Plays*, by Richard Chevenix Trench.



asserts to have been also his own composition, as made evident by corrected manuscript. It was impossible to translate such brief lines closely, with adherence to metre, and rhyme system; and even apart from that consideration, with a feeling for good taste. What is playful in Italian may be coarse in English. Surely any other poet would proceed like Rossetti, in the translation of his own work to re-visualize and to render conception by conception, and where necessary, take from the vision in the second instance, what would suit the language into which he now renders it, although before, he might have neglected to express these newly-chosen elements, and expressed rather some others belonging to the same essential composition.

Pointing to a similar conclusion, we note the striking fact that Rossetti translated into English neither his *Barcarola*,<sup>3</sup> nor his *Bambino Faciato*; the first depending so largely on a most fortunate rhyme "tomba-rimbomba," which could not be paralleled in English; and the latter little poem upon a quite praiseworthy and charming frankness, nay, naïveté, incident to Italian speech on the subject of paternity and maternity, which could not be compassed by a language bearing still, as doth ours, the scars of the Puritan Movement on its body, and the starch and bluing of a factitious holiness in the singing robes thereof!

Clearly, some theory of translation must be formulated by our students of literature who adopt this pedagogical expedient, which shall be modest enough to make a fair result seem within the regions of the possible. Lord Woodhouselee's well-known Essay<sup>4</sup> (1797) might help in dignifying with classic authority and copious, however old-fashioned, precedent, both good and bad, the Translator's art. Matthew Arnold's still better known Essay "On Translating Homer" would serve to correct what

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<i>Oltre tomba</i>	Beyond the tomb
<i>Qualche cosa?</i>	Is there aught?
<i>E che ne dici?</i>	And what say you of it?
<i>Saremo felici?</i>	Shall we be happy?
<i>Terra mai posa,</i>	The Earth never resteth,
<i>E mar rimbomba.</i>	And the sea, echoing, roareth.

<sup>4</sup>Reprinted, J. M. Dent, "Everyman's Library."

in the former may seem eighteenth century predilection for "polite" paraphrase. At all events, once a reasonable theory adopted, which takes into account (to repeat our contention) the indisputable fact, that any poet in his original, yielded unwittingly yet really to the demands, or the allurements of his native speech; and would, were he his own translator, do again likewise, only a trifle more consciously, when confronted with the commands and charms of the English Muse, to the neglect of any detailed resemblance between his first and his second production;—once then, such an accommodation between the translator and the paraphrast attained in theory, what an astounding education becomes possible in practice for the student of Literature!

Always will the language of the translator seem the more restricted, the less subtle, the less instinct with poetic facility, and felicitous correspondence of sound with sense. How will he not have to study the grand organ, on which, bounden captive of a foreign Muse, he must if possible transpose the composition scored for a whole orchestra of strange instruments! And when he has come to perform such feats with reasonable ease, supposing he has a creative imagination at all, how will he not, when deeply stirred, find it easy to improvise on his own account, as the spirit gives him conception and urges him to utterance?

It will be asserted, perhaps, that verse is possible only to the poet; and, that our college classes are not composed of poets. To this we reply: verse is an accomplishment, possible with fair perfection for any person of reasonable intelligence, if the training be begun early enough in life. There are those who have no ear for pitch, no sense of time, no eye for color. There are also, to be sure, defectives, degenerates, idiots. But it will be found that on the whole, a goodly percentage of healthy students do promptly master the art of versification with a fair enough degree of skill to make translation an available pedagogical method.

It may again be asserted, that we shall thus tend to produce countless pretenders, who, *invita Minerva*, will have to pay out of their slender incomes for the appearance from time to time of

innocuous volumes of verse which make the trained reviewer smile superciliously as they coyly look up to him from his book-thronged desk. Far be such a malign fate from us! To have acquired the accomplishment of verse, and the practice of translating great poetry, would if anything, tend to deliver us of poor, therefore quite useless rhymesters, and bequeath to us in their stead, good and perhaps excellent translators, and benefactors so of such of their fellow-men as cannot "read every language under the sun,—and think and speak and write in none!"

## II. PARAPHRASE AND TRANSLATOR.

Now it might not be amiss, while considering the problem of translation, to make clear once again by illustrations, some of the most elementary, but therefore often overlooked problems. In attempting of late to teach the Poetry of the Bible, merely as poetry, the present writer was confronted with the serious difficulty, that translations, for instance, of the Psalms, had been made for all purposes rather than that of exhibiting the rhetorical, or rather the poetic principle on which the effect of the original so largely depends. Coverdale's English is much praised and not without allegeable excuse. But respect for the integral imaginative unity was not in his philosophy, or in that of any scholar of his times. Dr. S. R. Driver's<sup>5</sup> New Version hepled much; the virile Dr. T. K. Cheyne more;<sup>6</sup> and Dr. Charles Augustus Briggs<sup>7</sup> occasionally; Mr. Horace Howard Furness (following Wellhausen) more often.<sup>8</sup> Always, however, it was found that the new translators were hindered from producing the desired total impact on an unlearned reader, because the word for word, or even line by line rendering, however idiomatic — on account of the enormous difference of language, implied associations, obsolete religious suggestions,—most grievously under-represented, to a positive poverty, the original

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<sup>5</sup> Clarendon Press, 1904.

<sup>6</sup> Book of Psalms, Kegan, Paul, Trench & Co. 1880.

<sup>7</sup> Translations in the International Critical Commentary, *The Book of Psalms*, 2 vols. Scribner's. 1906.

<sup>8</sup> Haupt's Polychrome Bible. Dodd, Mead & Co. 1898.

poem. More than half their real translations were, besides, in the notes; or implicit in their orientally polite presupposition of an, alas, non-extant Hebraic element in our diffused culture. No doubt the revisers of the Authorized Version, supposed that the Bible is *sui generis*, and must be translated without regard to the general principle of prime reverence for idiom in the translator's speech. Since, by the felonious practices of the unscholarly theologian, a translation is treated as an infallible, divine document, it becomes therefore, (in the opinion of many), more important to permit of no improper inference from the wording of the translation, than to produce the emotional and imaginative stimulations, and after-glows of feeling, on which, when all is said, the Bible must in the long run depend for its acceptance as literature at all, sacred or profane. To be rendered literally, and set every decent literary tooth on edge,—how conducive to the right devotional spirit! Well, the Revisers were children of their age, and servants, furthermore, not of the Blessed Muses, but of a half-hearted Modernism. So their labors were found far less helpful to the present writer than those of Drs. Cheyne, Driver, Briggs, and the elegant Mr. Furness, whatever the respective demerits of their versions, in eyes wonted to the ecclesiastical twilight of the Gods.

The necessity of paraphrase was what bore itself in upon the teacher more and more forcibly. Nothing, to be sure, must be set down in the free translation that did not, upon careful inspection, seem implied or suggested for any intelligent reader of the Hebrew at the approximate time of the Psalms' composition and living use in Temple or Synagogue worship. But such implicit elements of the composition as could not to-day be obtained from a close English translation, were then to be explicitly supplied, and the whole cast into a loose anapæstic verse, such as should, at least remind us that Hebrew Poetry did actually possess an accentual rhythm of its own, however in some respects unlike that adopted by the translator-paraphrast as most suitable for his didactic purpose.

## PSALM 130

Out of the deeps (as of the sea)  
 I cry to Thee, O God, who art forever;  
 God, my Master, heed my voice,  
 Let thine ears be exceeding eager  
 For my voice in its beseechings.

If transgressions Thou straitly reckon  
 O Thou, who art alone God,  
 Who, O Master, shall stand upright before Thee!  
 But with Thee, ay Thee, there is mercy,  
 That men truly may worship Thee!

I hang upon Him that is forever;  
 My life doth hang upon God;  
 On His name I stay my faith.  
 My life more yearneth for God my Master  
 Than they who watch for the daybreak.

[*Interrupting Chorus* : Watchmen (we) for the breaking day!]

Let Israel trust in Yahve!  
 For He, that is forever, is kind.  
 And multitudes find in Him their freedom,  
 And He, even He buyeth Israel  
 From all their transgressions, free!

The translator's modest contribution here lies in the recovery of the original unifying idea. The psalmist is speaking of himself and his people under the figure of bond-slaves of Yahve, God, that is to say, revealed as the unconditionally existent and self-consistent, who, however, condescends to necessarily reciprocal relations with them, as master of his slaves. Furthermore, he is such a master as makes himself adored and desired even as the dawn by the sleepless watchers of the night. He is one, besides, who will redeem not only the psalmist and his people to the relative liberty which his service constitutes, as compared with that of the Egypt or Babylon of their transgression (ay, and the only *true* liberty); but he is disposed and ready to redeem many more if they will but desire it, as many, indeed, as covet such a redemption. In this as in every other psalm, to be sure, the names of God are as critically important for the poetic translator as for the theologian. The awful mystery of the manifold meanings must be made specifically significant by regard to context, but more especially in view of the poem's

organic conception. In this particular case, it is the marvel of Yahve being Adonai that constitutes the very essence of the composition. So far, then, in one crucial matter, our translation must have improved, we dare to affirm it, at least in principle if not in performance, on that of the Great Bible or the Authorized and Revised Versions. Then, too, there is no doubt that the supposed gloss — the redundant “I say, before the morning watch” — becomes a real beauty when conceived as a ritual — or rather, a musical ‘repeat.’ We venture here to denominate it an ‘interrupting chorus.’ In sympathetic inclusiveness or catholicity of spirit the psalm has, nay, it would seem, must have gained not a little by our emphasis on the composition and on the construction.

Nevertheless, alas, for our own self-satisfaction, we also are human, and confess to grave disappointment. Our version is not the psalm we have chanted! “Out of the deep have I called unto thee, O Lord; hear my voice.” — “My soul fleeth unto the Lord, before the morning watch.” These assuredly were incantations to quicken the dead soul, vehicles of aspiring devotion not easily surpassed. We had felt the ‘deep’ as merely metaphorical, an abysmal anguish, it was a proud memory to have experienced; we had imagined ourselves on its account anticipating death, and fleeing on the wings of the morning unto the very bosom of God! True, the Authorized Version had only “My soul waiteth for the Lord;” but at least the “plenteous redemption” imparted soothingly a sense of infinite pardon for our peculiar needs; and perhaps unconsciously we have indulged a voluptuous sense of monopoly in the feeling that God should be feared by our enemies for the very reason that there was mercy in Him for the petty foibles of the faithful. It was all so deliciously egoistic, purely comforting, and oh, so privately pious!

True, then, the conscientious translator and paraphrast in this case admit humiliation; but they must record at the same time the cause. Slavery is no longer a living institution. It does not delight us to consider the Eternal God as our indulgent Slave-Master, who has bought us from some cruel exploiter of soul and body. Indeed, we take for granted that He is merciful.

It can appear to us no joyful new discovery that keeping books against us is not God's chief divine prerogative and most commendable perfection! The poem, then, is too obsolete in its organic image for great emotional reactions, unless we first, by historical imagination, restore some quite fortunately unthinkable social relations; but even so, will it fail to occasion a very vivid sense of relief. Losing the overlaid poetry of godly paraphrasts through bygone days, we sustain in this instance so egregious a loss therefore, because what can be restored, instead of what must be removed, is of no very thrilling present-day worth.

Quite otherwise do we fare when we undertake the restoration and careful translation, with but a little aid from the paraphrast, of the 45th Psalm, although even more violent liberties were taken with it, and for a long time, by such as suffered from hermeneutical hallucinations and piously super-induced exegetical dementia!

## PSALM 45

## I.

Deep-stirred is my spirit : | how goodly it is !  
Song-speech is upon me, | wrought fair for a King.  
My tongue the swift pen | of him *wisdom constraineth*.

More beauteous art thou, | than the sons be of man,  
Graciousness also | hath been shed on thy lips ;—

So the mighty God | hath blessed thee forever !

## II.

Gird thy sword on thy thigh, | most potent War-Lord,  
Thy hallowed glory | yea, and thy majesty.

Tread down, press forward | ride forth to battle,  
For steadfast truth | and meekness, even justice,  
And awful marvels | thy right hand shall show thee !

Thy darts are made keen, | the peoples fall before thee,  
Stricken in spirit | be the foes of the King.

Thy throne is, O Might of God, | from of old and for aye,  
An upright sceptre | the rod of thy rule ;  
Loved hast thou justice | and abhorred ungodliness :

So, the mighty God, | thy God, did anoint thee  
With a chrism of gladness | above all kings !

III.

Myrrh, aloes and cassia | they be thy vesture,  
From ivory king-halls | where thou takest delight;  
Daughters of kings | be among thy jewels,  
At thy right a King's bride | all Or of Ophir.

Harken, O daughter | and bend low thine ear,  
Remember not thy people | nor the house of thy father,  
And the King shall long | (*fair as Eve!*) | for thy beauty,  
He thy Lord is and God, | O bow thee before him,  
And the daughter *of the mightiest* | shall come with a gift,  
Of thy face shall sue favor | the wealth-lords of the people.

Altogether is she glorious | the King's daughter in *thy presence*,  
Close-woven broideries | of gold her raiment,  
In many-hued tissue | is she led to the King.

Virgin-trains of her comrades | shall be brought unto thee,  
O be they led | exulting and gladsome,  
O may they enter | the high hall of the King.

In the stead of thy fathers | shall stand up thy sons,  
Whom thou shalt appoint thee | o'er all the earth chiefs!

Made-memorable be thy name thro' me | from age unto age  
Where peoples shall praise thee | from of old and for aye!

First let us note the elements of paraphrase. The "ready scribe" with which ends the third line can convey no poetic joy to us as a metaphor, we who recall only too well "scribes, pharisees, hypocrites." To modernize it as "ready writer" only makes matters but a little worse. We have here in our poem a lost institution, a forgotten calling; and "him wisdom constraineth," describing his dignity and supposed function, is the best we were able to do towards the literary salvage of the opening lines. The intruded "fair as Eve" in the seventh line of the third stanza, is the restoration of an ancient pun which the rhythmic utterance, and surely the context, would keep present here in a Hebrew poet's mind, convinced reverently as he was of the significance at all times of personal names, and the gravity of the most trivial double ententes. To "desire" for the Hebrew was "to Eve"; and "Eve" was she whom God fashioned to utter in flesh the desire of man's eyes, and of his soul. So, to the king of the 45th Psalm, the bride is the desire of his eyes and of his soul, created on purpose for his



divine delectation. Apart from this particular pun, the paraphrast has had in this case a sinecure. What we offer is altogether the work of the conscientious translator, assisted in difficult places by the textual emender. When we alter the picture of the king as Rameses the Great slaughtering his foes, to the extent of making them be more humanely "stricken in spirit;" we do but recall ancient physiological psychology, which located the passions in the liver, pity and envy in the bowels, intellect and spiritual energy in the breast — particularly the heart — leaving the brain without ascertainable use to man. The same word is used here by the Psalmist as in the first line which we rendered "deep stirred is my spirit." But how revolutionary is not the change our translator has here wrought! We have now a true encomiastic epithalamial ode; and if it be taken Messianically, it must be on the score only of the theme:— a king greeted, in the hope of his realizing the Oriental ideal of kingship,—rather than on the score of any quotable theological phrases. If "anointed" with a "chrism" of gladness,— which saves him, at least verbally, from our modern disgust at the fate of Aaron's priestly beard;— he is not yet *the* Anointed, the "Christ," by many tokens royal alike and human. He has "sons" in the stead of fathers "for his honour;" and requires the poet's praise to immortalize his name. If he be in the place of God—"He thy Lord is, and God,"—this is alone mystically, for love's sake, to the bride; and if he be the very "Might of God," it is as occupant of a theocratic seat, for the cause's sake he espouses:— justice, compact of steadfast truth and meekness; and lastly, for his passionate and proud self-appropriation of the "mighty God" as indeed his very own. Still, as substantiating an Oriental King-ideal, who would deny the hero of the 45th Psalm an active and honorable part in fashioning the popular conception of the Messiah?

It is not the translator's fault if the historical critic uses the quite-questionable reading, "the daughter of Tyre," to identify the bride with the abominable Jezebel; and the praised King with the cruel Ahab; neither is he responsible for any possible agreement with the hopes entertained by the disaffected, in

connection with the accession of Jehu, the prophet-anointed usurper. Such definite and doubtful localizations hinder the poem's breadth of application and depth of emotional appeal; and are, from the poetical critic's point of view, irrelevant, nay, noxious gossip; from which, following St. Jerome's reading in his third critical Psalm Version,<sup>7</sup> we venture to deliver the present reader!

But there are cases in which century-long adoptions of a particular interpretation have to be fought, if we are to restore the integrity of the poetic conception. Of such cases let Psalm 23 prove a painful instance. All through the poem we deal, according to our judgement, with the sheep only, and the shepherd. The preceding and concluding chorus imply, in the natural view of the poem, the same figure as do the first two stanzas. The third must be more or less attracted to the remainder, despite "pasture's" possible meaning of feast, or "stretch" as "recline" at a banquet. But granted the proposed audacity, and again we have no more what the commentators gave us: the conventional feeding unto repleteness, and imbibing unto drunkenness at a board of divine plenty, with mysterious enemies inexplicably behind shields, or across the conveniently intervening tables. We have, instead, a most thrilling adventure:—on the high table-lands, the panthers and wolves are kept off by the shepherd, and the pasture has been cleared of poisonous weeds; the silly sheep, straying to the edge of the wilderness, is rescued from the prowling wild beast in wait for estrays; and his wounds are tenderly salved; too faint, however, to be driven to the brook for refreshment, the divine shepherd has given him to drink, from his own very flask in his very own cup, exhilarating now more than wine!

#### PARAPHRASE OF PSALM 23

Who unto his own ever cometh<sup>8</sup> | he, my shepherd, nourisheth me  
Wherefore (his very own sheep) | I shall fail of no goodly thing.

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<sup>7</sup> From the Hebre wtext, not from the Septuagint; *Quincuplex Psalterium*, 1508, text edited by Paul de Lagarde. 1874.

<sup>8</sup> The eternity of the divine name is viewed here dynamically, and in motion toward both himself and those he loves.

In the green homes of sprouting young grass | he biddeth me stretch in noon.  
 To wells of rest and refreshment | he leadeth me by gentle degrees, [plenty,  
 He quickeneth in me once again | the delight and desire of life,  
 He goeth before to guide me | in straight paths — true to his name!

Yea, although to the hill-pass<sup>9</sup> I wend | through gorges by day of death-gloom,  
 I will harbor no fear at all | lest anywise harm may befall me;  
 For thou, that art even thyself, | art verily nigh unto me,  
 Thy staff-of-sway and thy crook | when I pant, upstay me with cheer.

Thou spreadest abroad before me | my pasture (as were I thy guest)  
 Meetly in th' immediate sight | of such as would harry and slay me;  
 Thou hast soothed with healing ointment | my *cruelly-bruised* head,  
 And my cup (thine own, in my faintness) | overfloweth with gladness of heart.

Goodness and mercy (his sheep-dogs twain) | my life-long surely shall drive me  
 And I will return all my days to *his* fold, | who cometh to his own forever!

Vividly conscious we are of the bracketed temerity in the last chorus: "goodness and mercy" visualized as sheep-dogs, driving the sheep to the fold again and again! But so the text is explained that says the sheep returns forever and not "abides forever" in the Lord's house, shed, stable, or fold; and the vocable for "drive" (translated in the most authoritative dictionary "to dog") gets its full hitherto uncomprehended force. But, granted the temerity, who would not rather see in "goodness and mercy" the shepherd's sheep-dogs, than flunkies (as some prominent scholars would have them be), mysteriously driving the guests frantic with their officious attentions! If, however, the scandalized reader prefers (unallured by the anti-vivisection text so obtained) he may drop at will the paraphrastic suggestion and our parenthesis, and rejoice in the figure of the third stanza as merely implied with quiet innocuous delicacy.

There are, on the other hand, psalms in which the translator needs but verbal help from the paraphrast, like the 8th, which we here offer for inspection. True, the second and third stanzas get a fresh significance in the contrast of vital and inorganic manifestations of God's power; true, the line about the Leviathan, hitherto mere tautology, is a delightful surprise; and the renderings of man in his glory and in his humility (that is of the two Hebrew terms for man, paraphrased and contrasted), constitute mentionable restorations; true also the

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<sup>9</sup>A. V.: Valley of the Shadow of Death.

"lacking little to the stature of might that is God" has a Swinburnian rhythmic splendor, such as that poet so liberally drew himself from the Bible, and which we compel him to restore, for the nonce; true the "making sweet sabbath of rest" to the hero of the vendetta, helps much in comprehending the influence of the divine revelation through the babes at the mother's breast. But it is in no rendering of a noteworthy re-discovery, or textual emendation, or elucidation, that our service in this case consists. After all, if the quoted paraphrase is uplifting and imaginatively seizing, this is due to the strict dominance of every phrase, hemistich, line, stanza, by the same one thought, as was not the case in either the Authorized or in the Prayer Book Version.

PARAPHRASE OF PSALM 8

*Choric Refrain:*

O Thou who alone art forever, | O Lord of us, thine own,  
How high exalted Thy name and the truth thereof | through the compass of  
the world:

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Thou, who hast upreared Thy war-splendor divine | far over the heavens  
Forth of the mouths of babes, ay, sucklings, | hast founded Thy strength of  
life,

So answering such as be fain | with hate to bind down and beset Thee,  
So making sweet Sabbath of rest | to the foe and his kinsman's avenger;—

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When I cast up my eyes to Thy heaven | wrought of old with thy fashioning  
fingers;  
The moon and the stars whose pathways | Thou, changeless, hast estab-  
lished unchanging,

Lo! what is man, the loftiest, who with his breath ceaseth, | that thou in thy  
thoughts shouldest cherish him?  
What is man, the lowliest child of the soil, | woman-born, very man, that Thou  
should'st draw nigh him with solace?

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Thou hast made him such that he lacketh but little | to the stature of might  
that is God,

And with weight of worth, and adornment of grace, | Thou hast shielded,  
crowned, and enwreathed him.

Thou hast caused him to rule | over all Thou hast wrought with thy fashion-  
ing master-hand,  
The whole hast thou bounded and fixed in its station | as footstool under his  
feet:—

Sheep, aye and kine, | all the flocks and the herds thereof,  
And, likewise, the wild-beasts, also, | that prowl in the gaping waste,  
The birds that fly through the heaven, | and the fish that swim through the  
sea,  
And the nameless Vast swift-treading the highways | he cleaveth him through  
the great seas.

*Choric Refrain:*

O Thou who alone art forever | O Lord of us, thine own,  
How high exalted Thy name and the truth thereof; | throughout the whole  
world!

But in some instances, moreover, by the simple procedure above exemplified, an enormous result is effected poetically. "Voice of Adonai" is the regular Hebrew phrase for thunder. "Voice of Yahve" then carries the meaning of thunder, along with the awfulness of the greater divine name. Merely insert, line after line, "the thunder-voice of Yahve" and hear the result! Besides, there are two lines rejected from the text by some editors, as spurious (like the supposedly redundant "I say, the morning watch" in the before quoted 130th Psalm). View these rather as interrupting semi-choruses, not perhaps integral parts of the original composition, but intended and introduced by the ritual editor for æsthetic relief and contrast: the God of Glory thundering yet eternally serene above the tempest; the thunder-voice stripping the forests, yet the still small voice of his praise in the secret spirit of man, and in the inherent silences of the universe; and now, from provoking glosses, our two intrusive lines are transfigured into lyrico-dramatic beauties of no mean order.

## PSALM 29

*Grand Chorus:*

Praise Yahweh, who is forever, | O ye sons of the Powers divine,  
Praise Yahweh, who is indeed, | for weight of worth, strength of heart,  
Praise Yahweh, whose yea is yea, | in worship His Name begetteth,  
Bow low to Yahweh, alone very God, | in holy apparel of beauty !

The thunder-voice of Yahweh is | upon the waters above the firmament,

*(Interrupting semi-chorus):*

[God, the God of glory | uttereth the thunder]

Yea, Yahweh Himself upholdeth Him | above the encompassing  
great waters.

The thunder-voice of Yahweh | uttereth His creative might,  
The thunder-voice of Yahweh | giveth forth His awful beauty,

The thunder-voice of Yahweh | shattereth the cedar trees,  
Yahweh, and He alone, | doth shiver the cedars of Lebanon,

Lebanon He maketh in sheet-lightning | to leap like a young unicorn,  
Yea Sirion also | like a lusty fleet bull of the wilds,

The thunder-voice of Yahweh | heweth the scarpèd rocks,  
Yahweh, He alone heweth | the rocks with forkèd flames,

The thunder-voice of Yahweh | doth make the barren waste to dance,  
Yahweh alone doth whirl about | the barren waste of Kadesh!

The thunder-voice of Yahweh | causeth the térebinth-trees to writhe,  
Yahweh, and He alone, | rippeth and strippeth the forests bare,<sup>10</sup>

*(Interrupting semi-chorus):*

(Yet in the mansion of His Majesty | all things say softly : Glory !)

*Grand Chorus :*

Yahweh at the flood of yore | did set aloft His throne,  
Yahweh thereon is enthroned | as King in judgement forever,

Yahweh, His strength divine | upon His own bestoweth,  
Yahweh bestoweth His blessing | upon His people, ay, Peace!

In the 45th Psalm the translator exhibited to the attentive scrutinizer of his typography, a somewhat interesting æsthetic phenomenon, in the waxing stanza, not unanalogous to the gradual swelling or cumulative tripartite "Song of Miriam." The artful stanzas consist, namely of sub-stanzas respectively: the first,—of three lines, two lines, and a chorus of one line; the second — of two lines, three lines, two, three (a noteworthy doubling the first stanza) and a chorus of two lines (similarly doubling the first chorus); the third, of four lines, of six lines (doubling the first stanza in a different fashion), and then one of three, another of three, one of two and a chorus again as before of two lines. So strong is this impression of orderly unfoldment and strengthening by mathematical progression, that one becomes averse on this ground alone, if none other, to the ingenious detection and removal of glosses. Let the anxious observe what Dr. Briggs has left of the 45th Psalm, and then

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<sup>10</sup> A. V.: The voice of the Lord maketh the hinds to bring forth young, and discovereth the thick bushes.

ask if the present translator is an iconoclast! Perhaps he may be a redresser, rather, of icons on idolatrous pedestals; but that is not so bad, if the holy icons redressed are actually in the text of the original, which text is, whatever its faults, the best we are ever likely to possess on earth.

Carefully noting, then, this system of stanzas within stanza, we may sometimes be able to restore a lost line to its place, and produce a startling and legitimate beauty. Psalms 42 and 43 are by universal consent one poem. There is also, obviously even for the reader of the authorized version, a refrain after each stanza. Strange to say, in the second and third instance, although separated by an unfortunate editorial divorce, the refrain of the stanzas is identical; while in the first instance the Hebrew text shows a small, but all-important variation. Perhaps the second stanza opening with "O my God" caused some scribe to omit *God* from the last place in the just preceding refrain. But if so, why was it not later on restored? The omission is so singular, as to suggest its being intentional. Besides, when we note the text as it stands, a most audacious Joblike meaning begins to permeate the first stanza by retrospect from the refrain, which spreads irresistibly to the following stanzas. The Psalmist is faithful but unhappy, with a sense of fatal separation from his God. In the North in the snowy Hermon summits, to the East in the fertile Jordan valley, ay, and in the heart of the South, on the little hill of Zion,<sup>11</sup> God seems afar off, and some one taunts him (within his soul, or without) nay, many men taunt him: "Where is now thy God?" View the troublesome lines in the second stanza as an interrupting chorus (say, of children); observe the system of sub-stanzas within the stanzas; supply the missing taunt, which is cardinal to the composition, and so complete the rhythmic construction of the third stanza, and observe the amazing force given by contrast to the line following; and read then the translation in which there are hardly any liberties of the paraphrast beyond the renderings of latent meanings to the divine name, and let the honest literary reader report whether or not

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<sup>11</sup> Usually considered an unintelligible line!

there be gain in a purely literary translation of a literary masterpiece, for the religious, ay, or even for the theological reader.

PSALM 42-43

I.

As a hind that panteth and yearneth | after the swift-running waters  
Even so panteth my soul and yearneth | after the God of great might!  
My soul is athirst for th' omnipotent God | for God the deep well-spring of  
How long ere I go up and behold | the countenance of God? [life;

My own secret tears are become | my stay, yea, my bread day and night,  
The while all day long one taunteth me: | "Where, pray, is thy God of  
great might?"

These things am I fain to remember | and shed forth my soul upon me:  
How I led the multitude solemnly | to the abode of the mighty God,  
With jubilant shout and thanksgiving | in the blithesome throng at the feast.

*Chorus:*

Wherefore art thou thus bowed low, O my soul, | and makest thy moan  
over me?  
Abide thou God's time, Who forever is, | seeing surely I shall yet give him  
praise  
For the marvellous manifold salvation | of his countenance, even God's!

II.

O my God, my soul is bowèd low | that I needs must remember thee  
From the land of Jordan and the Hermon-peaks | yea, even from thy lowly  
hill:  
Abyss above shouteth to abyss below | at the cry of thy poured-forth cata-  
racts;  
All thy breaking billows and rolling waves | upon *me* do they pass over!

*(Interrupting voices, probably of children):*

[Day by day, He that is Yahve | giveth charge to his loving-kindness,  
And in the night-season the spirit of song, | even His, is with me.]

A prayer, lo, my prayer | to the mighty God, the fount of my life:  
I will say to my strong God, my Rock, | why hast thou stricken me from  
remembrance?

Why in sackcloth and ashes go I | in the midst of the encompassing foe?  
And with sneers that shatter my bones | my opponents scornfully gibe me;  
While all the day long men taunt me: | "Where, pray, is thy God of great  
might?"



*Chorus :*

Wherefore art thou thus bowèd low, O my soul | and makest thy moan over  
me?  
Abide thou God's time, Who forever is, | seeing surely I shall yet give him  
praise  
For the marvelous manifold salvation | of thy countenance, and my God!

III.

My judge be thou, and plead my plea | against a cruel and impious people,  
From a man without scruple and iniquitous | O do thou help me escape;  
For thou, thou art the God of my might. | Why cast me off as abominable?  
Why in sackcloth and ashes roam I hither and thither | in the midst of the en-  
compassing foe?

(While all the day long men taunt me: | "Where, pray, is thy God of great  
might?")  
O stretch forth thy light and thy troth | that they may guide me and ward  
me!

To thy holy hill let them bring me, | to the abiding place of thy greatness,  
That I may go in to the altar of God, | yea, God the joy of my joy,  
And I with the harp will bless thee, | O omnipotent God, my God.

*Chorus :*

Wherefore art thou thus bowèd low, O my soul, | and makest thy moan  
over me?  
Abide thou God's time, who forever is, | seeing surely I shall yet give Him  
praise  
For the marvelous manifold salvation | of my countenance, and my God!

Of course our versions would have to be outfitted with an elaborate system of footnotes, followed by an excursus for each stanza, and a score of appendices duly bespattered all over with Hebrew and Greek letters for their justification to the erudite. In our defence we will only adduce a line of Emanuel Geibel, who at the conclusion of his *Distichen aus Griechenland*, enumerates all that a poet should be, and finishes with the line:

*Aber der Thor nur verlangt dass ein Gelehrter er sei.*  
(But only a fool requires that a learned pedant he be.)

At many points, quite as many as any translator, he had to resolve ambiguities, select between possible alternatives, restore for probable corruptions of text; doubtless, although he had in the present examples of his industry the help of a scholarly

colleague,<sup>12</sup> he was no doubt quite often in error; but chiefly, from all sorts of other points of view than his own! Be all this as it may. It is boldly claimed here that a student of literature will, equipped with such paraphrases as the above, go to other translations more literal, greatly helped by having experienced the shock of a particular interpretation of his originals, in swift rhythmic movement, and with sufficient embodied commentary to make an immediate emotional understanding of the poetic compositions as wholes, possible, nay likely. To be sure the paraphrases are prolix beside the terse originals. That is a quite evident loss, which has to be sustained: the sense of fiercely compressed energy. But this loss, let it be boldly affirmed, is not always to be taken seriously as a defect. Only by occasional paraphrase, can a translator proceed at all, however closely he strives to adhere to his text.

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<sup>12</sup> Professor Wm. Haskell DuBose, M.A.